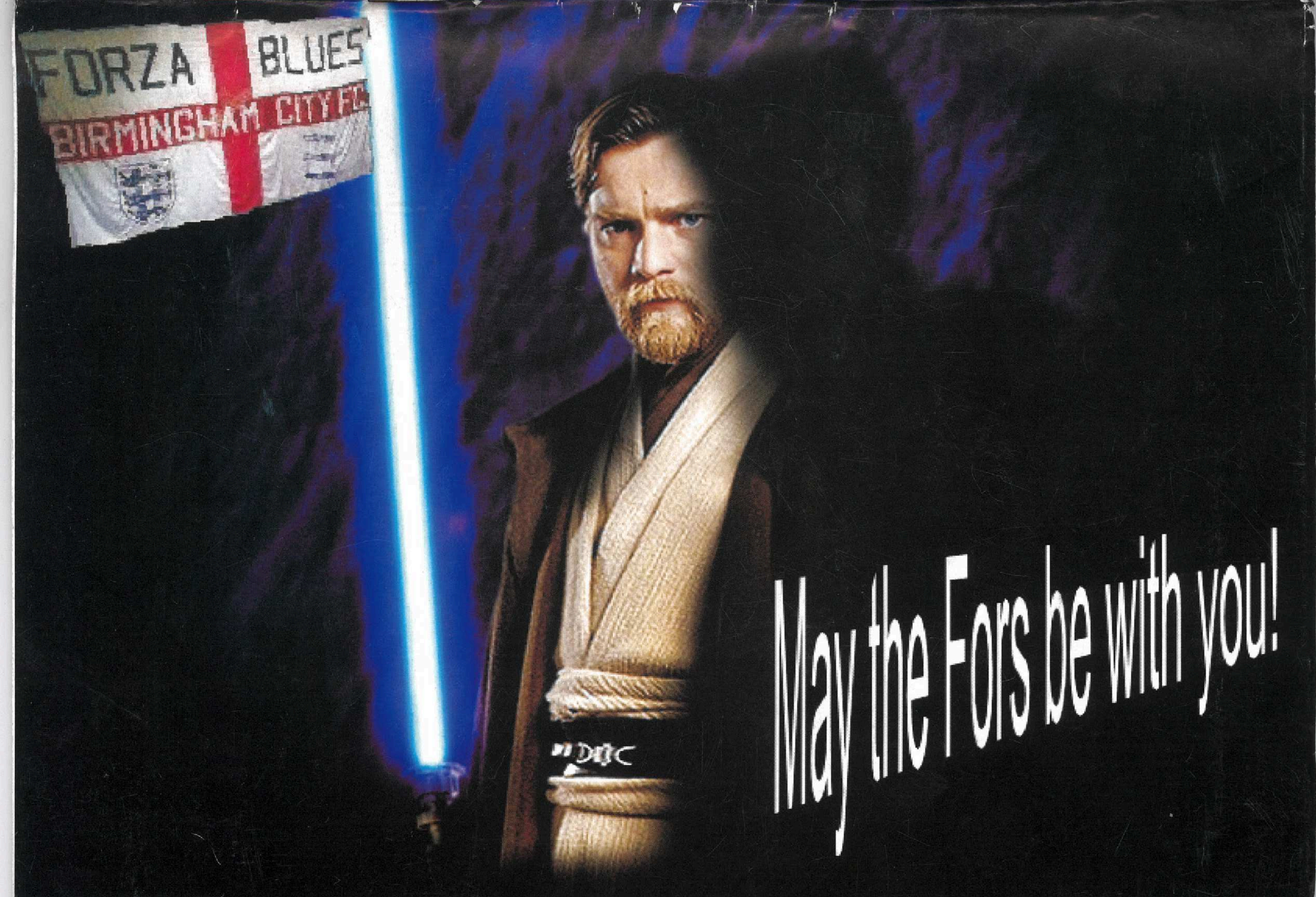
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ISSUE 112

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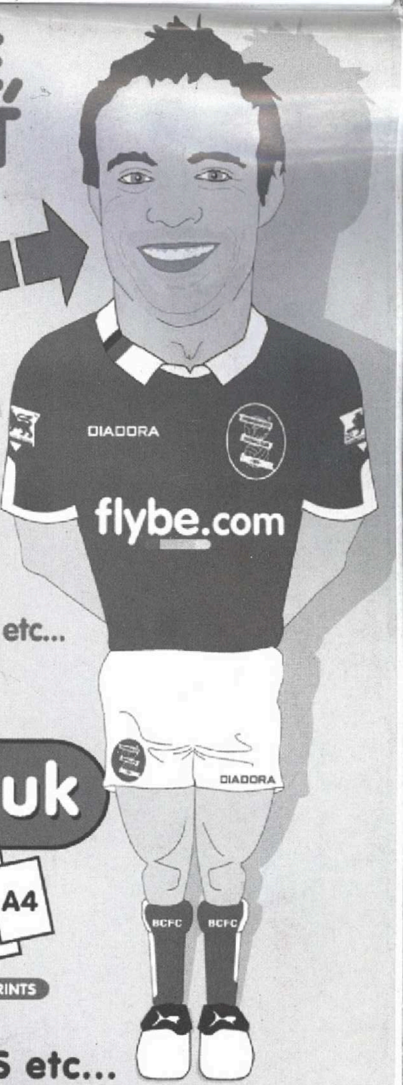

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blue

Here we go again, it's another roller coaster ride, a ride of highs, lows, elation and desperation. Four seasons and counting, but is there a big problem with Bluenoses getting bored with mid-table mediocrity!!! Is it all the boring clubs we have to play in the Premier league? Suppose you're thinking "why's he having a go the season hasn't even started yet". I'm just getting this out of the way now because at some point, and it wont be very far into the season, some some Noses will start to whine. This, I just cant understand. You only have to look at some of the letters sent into "Your Shout" in the Evening Mail. One, sent in only few weeks ago summed up what these Bluenoses (the moaning variety) think. This bloke thought we should go after players such as Essien, yeah right!. If nothing else, he wouldn't even give us the time of day. Why should he, what have we ever won? Oh, one other thing, his club want £32 million.

Now, this is the strange thing, I can remember where we came from, and how long we were there and I know that most of you can remember those bad old dark days of despair and disillusionment. For starters, all you have to do is turn on your Sky box and watch a Championship game, like the Leeds vs Millwall game the other week. What you'd have seen was poor football being played by very average players. What we've got now, is good players in our team playing the cream of England, week in, week out. Yes, I know, we lose games more often than we did when TF took us to three Playoff semi-final defeats and when 16-18,000 used to turn up and watch us play Crewe or Stockport. Great days!!! There's only a few things that are sometimes missing, and that's consistency, and perhaps a bit more fight and bottle.

The only other two things that get on my wick are:
1) ticket prices
2) kickoff times

Get prices down, especially for away games, though it does seem it's pay back time for the pricing strategy of KB for visiting supporters. It goes without saying that home games are too highly priced, though I can see the reasoning for this. Not enough seats, so make Noses pay through the nose (no pun intended) though it does seem that the club might have learnt their lesson with all the special prices for our next three home games. Or could it be that tickets aren't flying out of the ticket office like they used too?

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The Premier Unofficial Birmingham City Website

Now I'm wondering, are Noses getting bored with the Premier? I've had a good old moan above about this and that. But perhaps it's true, we've had three seasons of it, had our day with the big boys. It was good, but, hey "been there, done that" Also there is the Rover affect. How many Noses used to work at Rover? They're now out of work, so paying £400 odd for a season ticket is totally out of the question. Will crowds be down this season? Looks like it, because never before have the hierarchy at the Blues had this many special deals for early games

Then there's the kick-off times. If you look at the fixtures now, after Sky have done their bit, we've only got three, three o'clock kick-offs at home before Christmas. This of course is a pain. There's only ONE time English football should kick-off at the weekend, and that's it's correct time, three o'clock. Those days though, will probably never return, which is a shame.

That is my rant over. I Suppose I better let you know how I feel about the new season. As you'll know, if you're a regular reader of MIB, I'm a born optimist. If I told you I think we'll win the league, win a Cup or two, have the Forss get top spot in the scoring stakes, Brucie to win manager of the season award, you'd think I'm either having a laugh or lost the plot. I suppose deep down we all know there's only three teams capable of lifting the Premier League trophy. I'm thinking to myself that when any of the other teams in the league plays any of these three, why can't the players in those teams raise their game?. If Chelski's Kenyon's comments that it's a "One Horse race" doesn't get other teams going, nothing will. Now, I'm not saying Birmingham City could win the league, I wish we could. Though what I am saying is that another team could win the league apart from those top three teams. All it takes is for the rest of us to get points off the top teams. Easier said than done, I know, but it is possible. The way to do it, is to wind up your teams players, and trying to tell them that they are as good as Chelski's, or Man Ure's, by showing them Kenyon's arrogant statement, to go out on that pitch and get amongst those prima donnas's, kick them a bit, make them think a bit that if they're on the ball, they'll be closed down and hassled off the ball. They might be better

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The Victoria lads before Arse game in great spirits footballers but under pressure they might, just might fold. All I can say to the rest of us is, go for it. Take a chance and get stuck into those big three. Let's see a new order in the Premier.

Our chances this season? Well, last season, we all thought we'd be playing in Europe this season, it didn't work out. The team didn't gel, too many players were brought in, some didn't settle in, or play well. Injuries took their toll and we got off to a bad start, which you just can't do in the Premier. This season, injuries permitting, we'll do a lot better. We can't take it for granted that we've now got a good team, but I really believe that we will have a great season. We'll be in the top half, no problem. Perhaps as high as sixth. Also, a good cup run, either one will do. Perhaps the FA Cup, it is 50 years since we were last in the final. It's also been a hundred years at St Andrews next year.

Ok, it will be hard, most teams can beat each other on any given day. Consistency is the bye word. Get that and this time next season we could be booking our flights into Europe. One thing is for certain though, as always, I'm looking forward to the season, it's going to be exciting stuff from now until May. Up and downs all the way, but isn't it great that it's back and we're still in the Premier, and all the teams no matter which one, all start off with no points, all equal. Every team has to give it their biggest shot, and I do really believe we are on the verge of our greatest ever era. Watch this space, it's going to be great.

As always, Keep Right On, Keep The Faith, and "Have A Good Un"

Big Dave Thomas

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Here is the NEWS

AND SOME VIEWS

GENERAL FOOTIE NEWS & VIEWS

This will be a new piece that'll appear on the pages of MIB fairly regularly. It'll look at the news that's breaking in the world of football, and they'll be a fair few views thrown in for good measure.

SUMMER!!! Who the hell needs it. I've heard football fans say the break will re-charge their batteries. When it comes to football, my batteries are always fully charged. I suppose the players need a break though, because even a man who only works a few hours a day, plays once, or sometimes twice a week for ninety minutes, gets paid shed loads of cash, deserves at least 4 weeks off. I know, I'll get off my soap box, all that's not news, it's fact.

Summer is a time for the back room staff to come into their own. Deals are on the go, and hopefully new players are bought. Then, come August and every team in your division starts off from scratch. No points and all supporters should feel optimistic about their clubs chances in the coming season. Though, if you read some of the letters in our local rags, some fans are always on downers. Personally, I cant understand it, why be like that? Though down at Stan's, you hear the moaners all the time. I hate to think what they're like at home and work.

We all know how our season finished, and it was definitely on a high. It took us three seasons and 6 attempts to beat the Arse, but boy, was it worth the wait. For us, it was big, it was good and we thought we played well against the cream of north London. The press, on the other hand, thought a little differently. According to them, we played Arsenal's reserve team, that's because Wenger was saving his best for Man Utd in the Cup final a week latter. They had so many players either rested or injured!!! What a load of crap, they'll never accept that we are now an established Premier League team. We out played the Gooners and we deserved that win. So, the question has to be asked " have teams started to find out, about the Arse" as it seems, they're not quite the force they used to be. Might be jumping the gun a bit, but has the time come where one team is going to dominate the Premier? That team being Chelski, with Man Ure and the Arse way behind them? One thing is for certain, is that both these former giants just can't compete with Chelski. If this is the case, other teams will be able to muscle in on the top two spots after the Champions. Now I'm not saying we can yet compete with the Arse or Man Ure, but we can compete in games against them. Could we have ever imagined that possible three seasons ago?

SCOUSERS ROB EUROPE

What a fantastic night, the night Liverpool came back from the dead to steal the Champions League. To have the run they had was quite amazing. A few times it looked like they were going out, only for a late strike to give them renewed hope. Who gave them a chance against Chelski? I sure didn't, well, not until they got the away draw. Then, to go 3-0 down in a final, who'd have thought it possible. They looked totally out of it.

"I won it in a competition, honest!!"

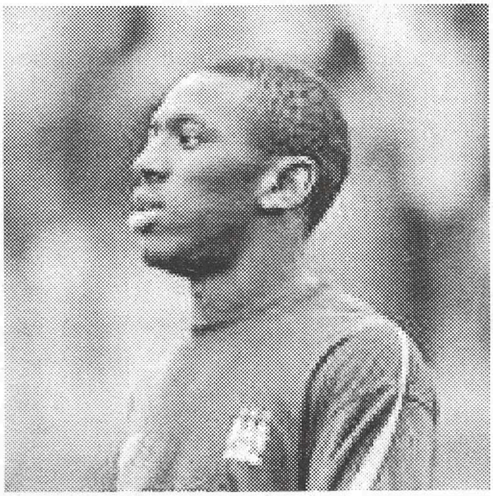
"Pfft! C'mon scouser, you can come up with a better story than that!"

Let this be a lesson, to us all. Ok, it wont happen that often (thankfully) but next time we're 3-0 up at half-time (chance would be a fine thing) let's not count our chickens. If we're ever 3-0 down though, let's keep the faith, get our prayer mats out, and you just never know.

THICK PLAYERS

Are professional footballers getting thicker, or just more arrogant? You only have to look at Pompey's new striker (if he ever got International clearance), Collins Mbesuma. The bloke signs his contract and then says he's already set his sights on a move to Man Ure!!! His exact words were
``Playing for United has been my childhood dream," . ``I will work hard to

make an impact in the Premiership to ensure I move on to play for United .' Now, is this arrogance or just down right stupidity?

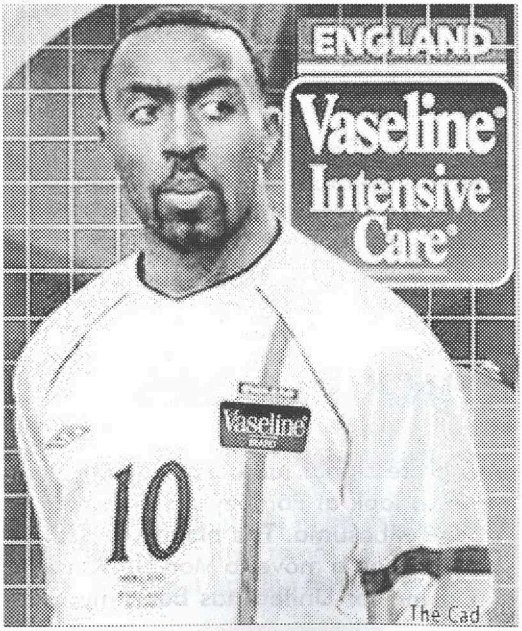


LOYAL PLAYERS

Not many of those about nowadays. Yes, you might bump into one, but it does seem that it all comes down to the extra £10.000 on top the £100.000 already offered. Look at Wright- Phillips, his manager came out and publicly stated that the flying winger was going nowhere. Then, a couple of days later WP says he wants off. Chelski's got the dosh, Citee ain't – result, the Mancs lose their star player, and Chelski add another to play in their gigantic squad.

QUOTE UN-QUOTE

Very surprised to see that bag of Shiite "Vaseline" leave his beloved Vile. Being a local lad, that's north of normality, you'd have thought he'd have had good things to say about the Vile. All us Bluenoses thought the young Vaseline was a thick bastard, But we got him all wrong. Why? Well, his parting shot was to say that it's great to be joining a big club!!! We knew it was so, but now it seems even those that are supposed to be supporters of that institution that is Vile, think they're NOT, a big club. Nice one Vaseline.



PREMIER PREVIEW

MATCH PREVIEWS WRITTEN BY DAVE AYLWARD

If Steve Guppy Married Mark Fish? - Fulham Preview

Who's that one in the middle Dad…?

Now obviously this inane drivel has been cobbled together several days before you lot part with your hard-earned quid's, so at the time of writing the only additions to the Foolham squad have been Ahmad Elrich (no, not a clue!) and Heidar Helguson from Watford. Leaving however have been Van de Sar and Cole and there are rumours about Boa Morte, Legwinski and Marlet also disappearing before the window shuts.

After seemingly months of bugger-all happening down at Stan's we went berserk and signed the Forse, Nasty, Andy Pandy and Nicky Arse in the space of about a fortnight. Hopefully by the time you read this Sir Steven of Bruceshire will have realised we're short of defensive cover and nipped out and bought a centre-half or two!

Call Me Mr….

Now I think Barbie's bloke (if it's not a plastic wig on his head, what the hell is it?), is a pretty decent chap. He seems well liked by the players and fans and even seems to get on with his Chairman, the outrageously ridiculous shopkeeper, El Fayed. But his team consistently play badly, and money's obviously tighter than a nun's chuff, so expect him to be on his bike long before you're sitting down for Xmas turkey!

I'm a celebo, get this shit outta here….

Foolham have always attracted the odd celebo down to the Cottage, going way back to the Johnny Hayes days (me Dad told me about him, honest!) and nowadays Keith Allen, Vanessa Feltz and Schnorbitz can all be seen regularly cheering on the whites. I saw

Chris Coleman, Barbie and Ken!!!

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Vanessa Feltz the other day and she told me her latest diet was working well and she'll soon be in a size 12. I was gob-smacked – I didn't know they made stiletto's that big! (I'll get me poncho)

Removes 99% of Scum..........

A regular feature this season will be a little look at the going's on down the road at the Mansion house. Deadly isn't yet, (well not quite!), and whilst he's recovering Dreary has been spending the sheckles like a pox ridden sailor on VE night. He spent a million English pounds on Phillips (I know it seems shit loads for a screwdriver to me too!) and £8.50 on Berger and Hughes. He's also got Taylor from the Arse and as we speak is sitting him down in front of the derby coaching video that Enckelclown and SorrySon used so well! The best thing that happened to the Scum in pre-season was the punch-up they had at Tamworth, which will probably result in Tango man Hendrie being banned before the season starts! Outstanding!!

Been there, done that....

Last year we went there around Xmas time and mullered them 3-2 with Heskey notching a beauty and a great goal from the BWT, before he upped sticks and feked off to Welshburn. They then caught us in the middle of the appalling run we seemed to have and beat us soundly at home with Brucie's Love child giving away a stupid penalty

And the lucky winner is........?

They've been shocking in pre season, even worse than us, and they're struggling to get a full team out with injuries and suspensions adding to an already depleted squad. We've been very average in the friendlies but at least the squad is improving week on week. I was not disappointed when the fixture list came out and we started here as we normally do well at the Cottage, so I'm going for...................................Blues 3-1

When Harry (Hill) Met Sally (James)? Man City Preview

Who's that one in the middle Dad...?

So just when the Manky fans thought life couldn't get a worse for them after the departure of their beloved SW to Chelski, it did. Barton proved once and for all that h a nutter of Olympic Gold Medal winning calibre by figh ing with a 15 year old Scouser (calm down, calm down that resulted in him getting sent home early from the P Pussycat bar in Thailand (oh yeah, they went over there play football, course they did!), and Dunne getting a busted foot that will keep him out for 3 months. Then t glowing turd in the drainpipe – they signed Vaseline fro the V***a. And paid real money for him! No honestly they did, £2M! Has years of listening to Sex Pistols and the Clash at full volume, finally addled Pearce's brain?

So we might not have signed Andy Pandy then? Or have we? Do we know? More importantly do we care? I just wish my willy was half as long as this bloody transfer saga seems to be! (I also wish that it too was being handled by Mrs Pesch – but that's just me!)

Call Me Mr....

If you could go down the Neutered Ferret for a jar or three of Riddlington's Slightly Suspicious with anyone in football, (other than Brucie of course!), it would definitely be Stuart "Psycho" Pearce wouldn't it? He always comes across as an honest, down to earth fella, who loves his football, got a great taste in music and would come in dead handy for sorting out the pukers and the piss heads at kicking-out time! Just how long he can survive at the disaster-that's-always-waiting-to-happen that is Blue Manky – who knows?

I'm a celebo, get this shit outta here....

Did you know that Liam Gallagher wrote Champagne Supernova whilst sat in the Kippax at the old Maine Road ground? Apparently it's a love song dedicated to Curly Watts from Corostenders who is also a die-hard fan (although what watching Bruce Willis has got to do with it is anyone's guess!). Cannon and Ball, Desi Arnez and Shergar are also regulars at the new Eastlands (ha ha the council paid for it) Stadium

Removes 99% of Scum..........

Meanwhile down in B6 – Deadly is looking like making a full recovery from his open-wallet, triple charisma-bypass surgery, and has recently returned to the mansion house to find out who the fek told Dreary he could spend that much money! Hendrie has publicly apologised for being orange (although nothing yet about him being so fucking ugly!) and newspapers are linking the Scum as firm favourites to get Baros , at least until someone tells him what the wages are!

Been there, done that....

Last year we gubbed them 1-0 at home with our Emily grabbing his first goal, and Anelka somehow missing from about 4 inches, and like the rest of the bloody league, they beat us comfortably away, 3-1 if senility has not yet robbed me of all my memory, in yet another turgid away performance from the lads

Barton - Physco

And the lucky winner is........?

I think this could be a really good game between two pretty similar teams. Defensively we both look pretty organised and going forward we're also pretty evenly matched. I think being our first game at home of the new season should just about se us through, so I'm going to go for........**Blues 2-1**

Physco - Pearce

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AS WE JOU

WHY CANT WE ALL ENJOY IT?

Here we go again and it's fourth time lucky for the boys in Blue. We're in the league we all dreamt about being in for so, so long. It came all of a sudden, one minute we were just another Nationwide team, an also ran. Playoff failure team.

Our new manager made the dream happen. Sixteen years of hurt and at last we could start to compete with the best in the land - Man Utd, Liverpool, Arsenal and the opportunity to play against the Vile. This wasn't going to be easy, and it didn't turn into a nightmare. We were safe with a few games to go in our first season, though back then it did seem as though every Bluenose, young or old enjoyed the ride. And why not?

The trouble is, it all seemed to go wrong in our second season of competing with the best. I can hear you say; "what's he on about, we finished in tenth position". The thing is, I'm not on about what was going on down on the green stuff. It was the expectation and disillusionment in the stands. Noses started to moan, some games it almost kicked off, well it did in the block I sit in.

What was happening to our great club? Bluenoses had never been known as moaners, Vile fans always won that accolade. Though, I suspect there is new type of Bluenose who has decided that Premier League football is for them. He, or she doesn't remember our history, or has forgotten where we came from and what being a Bluenose is all about. Now I'm not saying all new supporters come under this category, but there are a fair few.

Now something I just can't understand is, why any modern day Bluenose expects us to win? It's just not in our history. In the past, when we thought we'd cracked it, it would all fall apart at the seams. I know things are different now but why still has that defeatist mentality? Though I'd say, it's not a defeatist mentality; it's a realist mentality.

Now, I'm a bullish type of Bluenose. I always go to games either thinking or hoping we'll get a win, or a draw. I'm confident that we've got a good manager who will make mistakes like anyone, he's only human. One thing I'm not though is bored with the Premier. It's a dream that I

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RNEY ON!!!

dreamt about, and I suspect you did too. The thing is, we're now living that dream, but how much are we really enjoying it?

I suppose over a period of time, you forget the torment of season upon season of failure. The crap teams that used to turn up at St Andrews and turn us over. The crap football on show and the low crowds. Yeah, I hear some of you say, but some of it was good fun. Well, your right there. It was cheaper, you could always get in, and tickets for an away game were unheard of and if you wanted to turn up, it was cheap. Now, of course, it costs an arm and a leg. It's even expensive at the smaller clubs like Fulham, Charlton and Bolton. You could say, our club started this spiralling away ticket prices fiasco but other clubs have jumped on the bandwagon now, and that in the end will keep normal working class supporters away from watching their team around the country.

In the end, there would always be some downside to us getting up. Ticket prices and availability is the one thing that affects normal supporters. Though this shouldn't really be enough for us Noses to say, "Wish we were back in the Nationwide" What would be the point in it all? Every team in the world wants to get as high as humanly possible in their respective league. To get into the Premier is the ultimate goal in England. I bet Wigan wouldn't want to be back down in the Championship!!

When we got promoted, survival was the first thing on our agenda, and then to establish ourselves. I think we've done that now. We over performed in our second season in the Premier. Last season was a disappointment, though, if you look at the statistics, we weren't far off a European place, it's that close.

The only thing missing was consistency. Get that and this coming season will be different. But, the big question is, will we enjoy it? Almost every day there are letters in the paper and messages on the boards complaining about selections, purchases and sales. Yes, I know, everyone has his or her right to have his or her say. If you pay your money you've got the right. It's the consistent sniping about why we're not as good as Arsenal or Man Utd. We're not a big top three team, never have been, and probably never will be. What we should aim for is to pick up the scraps that the big three fail to get, nothing more and nothing less. To try and compete financially with those teams would probably bankrupt the club and that would be suicide.

Those that moan now would also be the first to moan then too. I know, every team has its' fans that are never happy and I'm afraid you'll never get rid of the negative few. That's what we want to keep it down to a few.

We've now probably got the best squad that we've had since the early seventies. That was a small window of opportunity for us to progress further up the league to get bigger and better. It didn't happen. The team that was built between 1972 to 1975 came and went. Before that it was 1955 to 1957 and every other season was either a struggle in the top flight or trying to gain promotion.

It's in our history to be just ordinary, cant change that. Yeah, there comes a time when perhaps you have to forget your roots and to start to think big, and that's what is happening now. We've got to walk though, before we can run. There was only one agenda on getting promotion, and that was to survive, nothing more nothing less. How many seasons though? I'd say, as long as it takes.

Though, with the squad now assembled at St Andrews survival is a thing not to worry about. We've now got a team to push on, and make all us Bluenoses proud. These are the great times we've waited for. It's going to be hard to gain points to improve on previous seasons, so when things don't go our way, it's not the time to boo. It's the time to get behind the team all Bluenoses supposedly love. That love doesn't mean we can't have our say when thing do go wrong, but to boo and jeer our team just isn't right.

We are now living through the best Birmingham City Football Club years for well over 30 years. We had 16 years of decline that almost saw the end of us. We've never won anything other than a League Cup when the big teams didn't even bother to enter it. Our highest placing in the top division was sixth. Right now though, we are on the verge of something special, something great, the best times a Bluenose has ever seen. So, lets all enjoy the ride; let's get behind our team like we've never done before. One thing is for certain, when the good times do finally go, I know I will look back and know in my heart that I'd enjoyed every minute of it.

SEASON PREVIEW

This season we are mostly..........

By Dave Aylward

So boys, girls and other family pets, here we are again at the dawn of a new season. The sporting wasteland that is the summer has gone. No longer will we have to pretend that we give a shit about whether a load of chinless hoorays waving a stick can get the better of a load of convicts that we've stupidly let back into the country to batter us at a game we invented, or whether that serial bottler "Timbo" can actually make it as far as the 2nd week of the annual festival of middle-class dross that is Wimbledrone–on-and-on. No, now the real action begins. The Premiership is back!!
I'm going to show you what all the teams have been up to all summer and to give you a sneak preview at the final table as I think it will end. So in alphabetical order we begin with......

Arse

believably sold their captain Viera–oh-oh-oh-oooh to Juve and replaced him with a bloke called Phlegm? Smeg? Kleb? Summat like that. Apparently very big in Lithuania!

Blackburnthebastards

Who gives a shit who the lying, cheating , BWT will be playing alongside next season? Lets hope that he, Hughes and the traitor Bowen all do each other a serious mischief in the shower!

Pig Fuckers

Big Sam has spent the £27.50 he seems to get as a budget very wisely this year and bought some no-hoper with a dodgy mullet from Uzbekistan or somewhere, and an economy pack of bibs for El Hadji Spit The Diouf (how does he run with Bob Carolgees' hand up his arse?)

Happy Valleyers

Curbs, god love him, has decided that as his lot end up on their knees faster than Abi Titsout, he'll add lots and lots of players to the squad in the hope that some of them won't be knackered by April. He's bought Ambrose, Smertin, Sorondo, Bent and Spector that I can remember and another 5 that I can't!

Chelski

Sardine breath has added 2 new players so far to last years Champions – SWP, who along with Joe Cole will be getting splinters in their arse they'll spend so long on the bench, and a left back who goes under the unlikely moniker of Arsehole Del Horny! They'll probably also end up with Essien, Ronaldhino, Ronaldo and Ronald fekin McDonald by the time we get started!

BlueScouse

The ginger jock has been linked with even more players than Brucie has this season, but so far has only managed to tempt the-once-good Davies and the never-will-be Arteta to join his happy band. Obviously the lure of the ONE game they'll get in the Chumps league, before losing to a load of part-time waiters and bus drivers from Liechtenstein, was not enough to sway anyone else to come!

Foolham

Oh dear, oh dear! What the hell is happening down at the Cottage? Barbie's bloke Coleman (look at his hair!) is in all sorts of trouble. Cole has gone. Legwinski looks about to. The chairman says they're skint and the only players they've bought in are Helguson from Watford (average at best) and Ahmad Elrich (no I've never heard of him either!) Gonna be a very long season.

RedScouse

So Robin Hood has decided to stay with his merry men after all Despite prostituting himself to Chelski all year, Gerrard ha decided to spit and not swallow after all and signed a five year £105K a week contract at Anfield. This caused so much joy i RobberLand that one guy almost went out and got a job t celebrate, but luckily he's feeling much better now!

BlueManky

Psycho has added well to his squad with Masumpa-up-your-jumpa signing on again, and the surprising purchase of Andrew Cole (as the pretentious twat now insists on being called!). Not such good news for him however was (Dick) Barton's attempt to eat Richard Dunn (I always prefer kebab when I'm pissed), or his attempted mugging of a 15 year-old scouser. His defence that he was only asking the lad for his hubcaps back didn't wash with the Thai old Bill either.

McUnited Patriots

Busta Bloodvessel has added Korean Park Ze Car and Chinese player Dung Flung Hi to his massively over-rated prima donnas for this year. Horseface looks fit again and apparently Mr Angry is lined up to replace Keane in midfield when his pacemaker finally gives out. He also, at long last, has bought a decent keeper in Van der Volk (all together now .... da da da daah, de da daah, de da da da da daah....)

MiddlesVa**

Whats up with Mclaren's hair? He looks like he's got a Scargill Shredded Wheat combover thingy going on there. Very weird. Oh and they've bought a couple of players too, one of which could be banned for 6 months for breaking a players leg! A deal so bad even Deadly Doug wouldn't have done it!

BarCode Utd

Yosser Hughes has spent the summer bitching about Kluivert, Bellamy, Bowyer and Robert before finally selling them all. He's also got rid of O'Brien, Hughes and Ambrose, who he must've liked because he didn't slag them off. He's bought in Emre and Blues-target Parker, so with Dyer and Milner will now have the smallest midfield since Doddy put together his Diddymen XI for the Taxman's Charity Match

PissoffPompey

Pepe Le Pew has sold Yakuba to 'Boro and replaced him with Collins Ntofontofo Mbesuma, "That's £29.99 for the shirt mate, and 45 quid for the lettering"!! They've also added Weserveld, Vignal and Viafara. Apparently your name has to be worth 24 at scrabble before they'll sign you!

Mackams

Jesus who HASN'T McCarthy signed? At last count 193 players had come into the club, with only Stewart leaving. Most of them are very average 1st Division players with the exception of Nosworthy, who is a pub player!

Spurzzzzzzzzzzzzz

Jol has added to Spud's already massive squad by buying Rodrigo Defendi, Mounir El Hamdaoui, Tom Huddlestone, Aaron Lennon, Wayne Routledge and Teemu Tainio. Obviously this is great news for the diehard faithful as they have enough trouble pronouncing Michael Brown!

Waste Ham

Isn't it lovely to have the media darlings back in their "rightful" place in the Prem? Once again the papers will be stuffed full of the academy and Brooking, Cottee's goals and Pardew's insane ramblings. Doesn't it make you want to hurl? They went down 'cos they were shit. They'll be going down again 'cos they still are. Get over it and move on. Don't care who they've bought 'cos they're tossers!

Wigwam

Aah bless! Isn't it lovely that in these cynical days of money orientated, high pressured football, a sweet, little old team like Wigan can make it to the big boys league? Nah, is it fek! Down by Christmas, back where they belong with the pub teams. They've bought no-one because most players couldn't find Wigan on a map of Greater Mankyland, let alone on a Premiership table.

Which just leaves us and our neighbours.......

Yam-Yams

Yeah I know, I'm amazed they're still in this league as well! Bryan "Prozac" Robson has added Chris "Sicknote" Kirkland (who'll probably break a leg walking to the coach on the 1st day of the season!), and Steve Watson (no, seriously!) to his squad. So lots of ambition there then. Having avoided relegation on the final day last term, the Buggies are clearly giving up without a fight before the season even begins this time round.

Us

Sir Steven of Bruceshire has turned Nasty's loan into a permanent deal, and when Deportivo stop fekkin about will do the same with Andy Pandy. The Forse is ours for the bargain price of £3M, (please God let his knee be ok!) and will do nicely with our Emily up front. Izzet looks fit and Dunny should be ok by late September, so we've got the nucleus of our best ever squad. Add a bit of defensive cover for when King Kenny's knees finally give out, and a bit more steel in midfield and I think we'll go well. So last, and very much least....

The Scum

Sexpest O'Dreary has really benefited from Deadly being carted off to the Twilight Home for the Fiscally Challenged. He's actually spent some money this year! Okay its only about £4-50 on Phillips but hey it's a start. I bet the 12 toers are crawling out from whatever particularly nasty looking stone they've been lieing under, to grunt how they're going to be the best in the midlands, won the European Cup, semi-finals are played on their ground etc.etc. When faced with this nonsensical outburst do one of two things -

1) Go "yeah, yeah whatever mate" and then hit them with something heavy (lots of fun, but the management have told me to point out, technically illegal). Or

2) Point out that if we had had a 20 year head start, we'd be so far ahead of them they wouldn't be able to see us with a high powered fekin telescope, never mind celebrating 'cos we'd actually managed to finish above them! (then resort to item 1 above!!)

So that just leaves the final table -

1 **Chelski**
2 **ManUre**
3 **The Arse**
4 **RedScousers**
5 **Barcode Utd**
6 **Us**
7 **MiddlesV***a**
8 **Pig Fuckers**
9 **BlueManky**
10 **BlueScouse**
11 **Spurzzzzzzzzzz**
12 **Happy Valleyers**
13 **Scum**
14 **Blackburnthebastards**
15 **PissOffPompey**
16 **Foolham**
17 **YamYams**
18 **The Mackams**
19 **WasteHam**
20 **Wigwam**

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VIKING TO

By Sky Daz

Mer

There are no direct flights to Stavanger in Norway. You either go via Copenhagen or Frankfurt. I chose Frankfurt. I'm always eager to fly over Germany just like my granddad was.

By the time I set off Blues had already thrashed the part time plumbers and shop workers of Egersund 2-0 thanks to goals by Gray and Kuqi. I left for Birmingham airport on Friday at five in the morning and arrived via the Fatherland in a surprisingly bright and sunny Stavanger on the west coast of Norway for midday. The small town is at the heart of the Norwegian oil industry and I managed to visit a customer on Friday afternoon in order to justify my trip and some of the expenses!

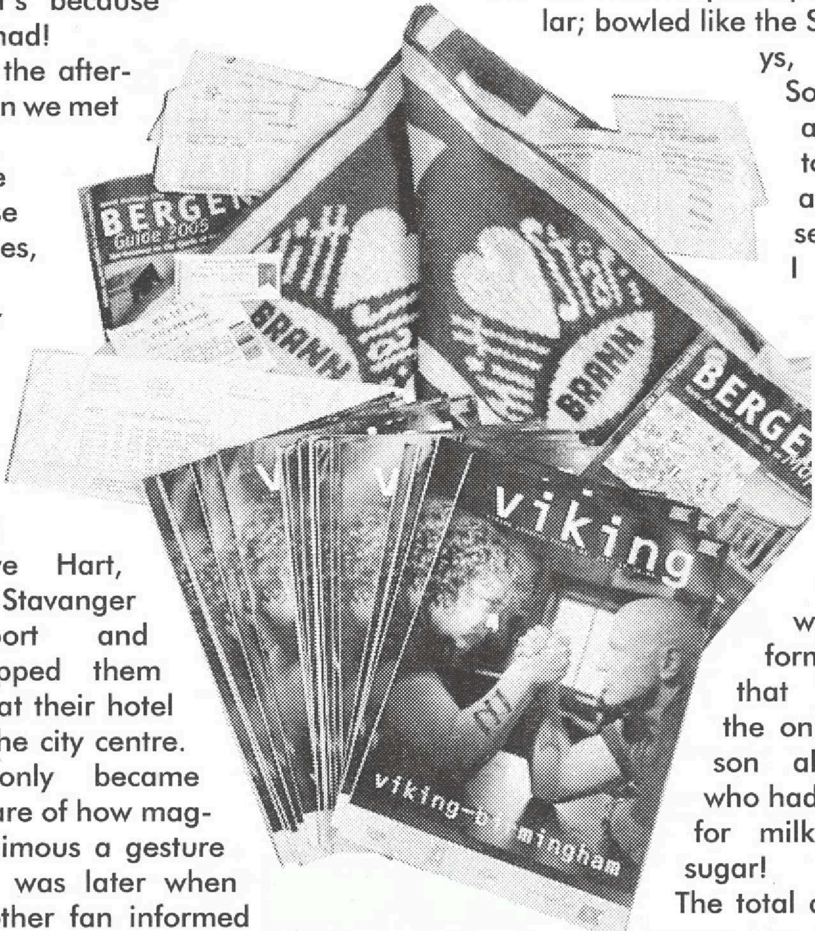
The town was vibrant on the night with many visiting Leeds and Birmingham fans enjoying the unusual good weather and the superb hospitality of the locals. Most pubs were packed and despite the normally lethal combination of Blues, Leeds, alcohol and foreigners there was not an ounce of trouble or conflict. And quite frankly that's how it should be! Perhaps the extortionate cost of alcohol was a contributory factor to the good nature of the marauding hordes!

I was finally persuaded to go to bed by my own body at six the following morning and left my Norwegian hosts playing guitar, singing strange local songs and drinking anything with the remotest amount of alcohol in it! They told me I was a lightweight!

URS!!!

orabilia supplied by Gary Hailing

Finally it was matchday. All the plans of spending the day pre-match being a tourist disappeared thanks to the state of my host, Trond, who looked like he had only had around two hours sleep. That's because he had!



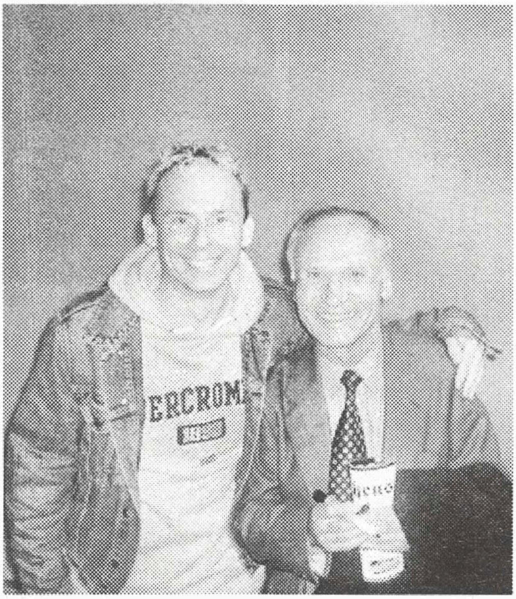
On the afternoon we met two Blue Nose mates, Phil Marshall and Dave Hart, at Stavanger airport and dropped them off at their hotel in the city centre. I only became aware of how magnanimous a gesture this was later when another fan informed me that the taxi he had just caught to do the same trip had cost him over fifty pounds!

The Leeds match kicked off at two o'clock which meant that around lunch time the town was full of Stavanger and Blues fans all mingled happily together. Some fans went to the ground via ferry and some used the more traditional tarmac.

The stadium is quite spectacular; bowled like the St Marys, Southampton, and all seating. I went for a coffee just before kick off and was informed that I was the only person all day who had asked for milk. And sugar!

The total attendance was a few

thousand spread around the ground and the locals were in good voice as they tried to rouse their heroes. They sang a few English songs as well to make us feel at home 'Sing when you're winning, you only sing when you're winning', which was nice. The Blues knocked the ball around well but the friendly nature of the game and the sparse crowd gave the impression of a training kick about. Muzzy looked happy though!



Right on half time Pennant beautifully curled the ball around the Stavanger wall and into the net off the post after Kuqi had won a free kick on the edge of the box. In the second half Forssell came on and looked lively and both he and Anderton struck the post.

On the concourse afterwards we met a very happy Ralph Gold who was more than satisfied with how the tour had gone. I told him to go somewhere cheaper next time and he politely laughed. I don't think he cared.

RUMAC
KILT OG REKLA

In light of the sad events in the last match though against Bergen the Blues may well have to cross Norway off the tour list for the future. We all wish the young lad a speedy recovery and hope that young Painter can quickly forget the incident and proceed with his promising career.

THE GABBIE CABBIE'S

BIRMINGHAM CITY MOMENT

There's no Butts about it, Nicky is a Bluenose and so is Walter too
I think both will be hits and terrace favourites of the boys in Royal Blue
I know there haven't been many changes and to be honest it wont be such a bad thing
Coz we had to many to bed in last season and now we've got a wizard on the wing.

There's been a few changes off the pitch as well, a new kit sponsor in Londsdale and Sockatyes for our socks
Though sadly we've lost Birmingham City ladies coz the club pulled out and I think that it sucks
We have a number of good young un's, and I firmly believe Kilkenny is the best
Hopefully we'll see him get a run out, allowing one or two to take a rest.

This is a big season for us and with a reasonable pre season behind us, Bruce will get his just reward
We'll be more consistent this time around and perhaps some won't be as quick to put him to the sword
So it's right here, right now thank God and with the first three games all winnable for the Blues
I predict 7 points from those fixtures, 2 wins & a draw coz the Blues ain't gonna lose

Gabbie's Teaser - Q: What player made a surprise appearance in the film Hanibal? Answer on page

THE WAY

FIVE SEASONS & COUNTING

This will be a regular article, which will look back at where we were five seasons ago. Five seasons might seem like ages ago to you and I suppose it does to me, but the 2000-01 season doesn't really seem that long ago. As with the start of every season I, like thousands of other Bluenoses hoped, this would be our year.

After the debacle of the Barnsley Play-off semi-final, we should have been calling for the head of Trevor, but it did seemed that talking of getting rid of the once "great" man, was out of bounds. Though I must say at the time, I had no qualms with him carrying on with the fight to get us to the promised land.

Going back to that first leg against Barnsley, I just can't remember a performance that bad, in such a special game. What I can remember is fighting breaking out in the Tilton between Noses, who either stood or sat in total bewilderment at what they were witnessing. One thing not to forget is that teams that fail for the second time usually do it the season after? We'll see.

August saw us start off the campaign down at Loftus Road against QPR. which happened to be the start of my going to away games again after a very, very long break. What a fantastic hot day, pity the football wasn't as good. Blues packed out the away end and tried to raise the performance of our Bluenoses hero's but to no avail. A boring 0-0 prevailed, and not a very good way to start off a promotion campaign.

Again TF had been given the cash to push for the elusive promotion places. He brought in Burrows, Eaden and the Horse. High hopes rested on the shoulders of these three players. Burrows for his top flight experiences, Eaden for his dependability and the Horse to get the goals to push us the little bit further up the table. Perhaps, we might not have to go through the heart attack inducing playoffs?

WE WERE

Fulham came to Stan's in our first home game of the 2000/01 season and their new manager Tigana had been given a kings ransom by Al Fayed to get them into the Premier. He'd spent big, really big, bringing in Louis Saha for £2.1 million (how much did Fulham sell him for, £10 million I think) they also had Hayles, Reidle, Lee Clarke, John Collins, Finnan. Chris Coleman, who's their manager now was in the centre of defence, and a certain Maik Taylor was on their books.

Almost 22,000 were in Stan's, to hopefully see the Blues get off to a winning home start. It soon went terribly wrong. By half-time we were 2-1 down and looking very inept. Also, very early on, the Horse got badly injured, though he did get his first goal for the Blues. He was to miss the next 4 games. The second half wasn't much better and in the end we went down 3-1. Not a very good start to what we all hoped would be a promotion season. Fulham were odd's on favourites to go up as champions.

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Languishing down in twelfth place wasn't exactly where we hoped we'd be. Got to say though, it's a marathon and definitely not a sprint. If nothing else, TF sides always dug in and usually

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Born To be blue mib

GENEROSITY B

The tension was almost too much, fans were biting their nails, and the look of nervousness on their faces was immense. Supporters had radios pressed against their ears awaiting the good or terrible news from other grounds. Then the news came through, the roar went up, and to a man (& woman) the massed ranks of Noses started to sing, "Feed the Horse and he will score" Just before the final whistle the PA man announced the news, a tremendous roar went up. You'd have thought we were the team staying up and it was the Buggies who'd just won to help US!!!! But no, the Buggies had won their game and, against all odds all the other teams had failed to win, so, for the first time ever in the Premier, a team bottom at Christmas had survived the drop, and fair play to them.

Let's get one thing straight here; I've got no beef with the Buggies. Though I must say, they are an arrogant bunch in some ways. They've always had this habit of looking down on us and thinking they were better than their neighbours; though in the case of the Vile, that's true. There have never been any problems between the two sets of supporters. Not like us and the Vile and them with the Tatters. So, all in all, I'm not too fussed about them. I can take 'em or leave 'em, though understanding them can be a problem sometimes.

Even Brucie mentioned it, and I'm thinking he might be thinking the same thing here "why" be oh so generous. It's a good trait to have, being generous. Though I fear most Noses just went right over the top in their cheering for them there Buggies staying up.

Now I'm thinking to myself, if the boot had been on the other foot would they have been so generous; would they have cheered so loudly? I may be wrong here, but I really do believe that if we had gone down they'd have cheered as loudly as we did because they stayed up. Now that is where we find the deference between our two sets of supporters. All in all, we're still happy to be where we are now, in the Premier, but the Buggies think that they should be up with the big boys, but not with us.

Answer to Gabbie's Teaser:J Joachin - while playing for Leicester he was on TV during the filming of Hanibal "one for a quick eye"

mib Born To be blue

davethomas@madeinbrum.freeserve.co.uk

EYOND BELIEF!!!

So, talking of the Buggies, them staying up, and our generosity towards them, I had a letter at the end of last season. It was just a bit too late to put in the final MIB and being as the Buggies did stay up, I thought it only right to include it now. See what you think. The Haggis does make a lot of sense.

To Fairly Large Dave,

What the fuck is going on? Have Bluenoses been taken over by Yam Yam aliens? In the boozer before the Pompey game over the half the lads said they wanted the 'Olbeyun' to stay up, in the ground I hear the same mutterings, spoken quietly out the side of their mouths mind, (very Arfur Daleyesque) then I pick up your fine perhaps under priced? publication and you, fairly large Dave are spouting the same, have you all been eating to many faggots & payes?

Well I for one have an extremely long memory and I DO bear grudges. Like when TF was in charge and we were all over 'em, only for the Yams to breakaway and score the winner, "we only need one chance" the thick Yams sang for about two years.

In 1994 we win on the last day of the season only for the 'Olbeyun' to do the same and send us down. Did they want us to stay up? I can still remember me mate, scouser wig on, trumpet in hand sitting on the pitch at Prenton Park crying his eyes out, and he was 32 at the time.

The 1968 FA Cup semi-final, despite being all over em (again) Pickering hitting the woodwork on numerous occasions they still beat us and lifted the Cup at Wembley. Did they worry about us? Did they care me Dad was so pissed off he went to get an Argus and we didn't see him for 3 months. I was only four but I'm still not happy about it.

1931 FA Cup final, Blues are favourites and have the better team, we have a perfectly good goal disallowed but again 'Olbeyun' do us to lift the cup. Me old Grandad hitchhiked all the way home from Wembley, he got back at 5am and got run over by a milk float in Selly Oak. He detested the Baggies and never walked the same again.

Don't get me wrong, I hate the Vile ten times more of course, but please Bluenoses, stop this middle class puffy attitude and get back a bit of the 'us against everybody else' mentality. If this carries on we could end up like Fulham or Southampton supporters, applauding opposition goalkeepers and clapping good passages of play from either team, God forbid!!.

For the record, I hope every other Midland team gets relegated every season, eventually sinking into non-league obscurity and financial ruin, leaving us, the only one that counts, on top of the pile for a change. Yes, I am one eyed, yes I am proud of the fact, but am I a dying species?

PS, I wish Noel Blake, Mark Dennis, Mick Harford & Hoppy were still playing, now there was passion for you!

Yours Sincerely, Haggis (Weoley Castle)

HE'S RAGING MAD - IT'S TH

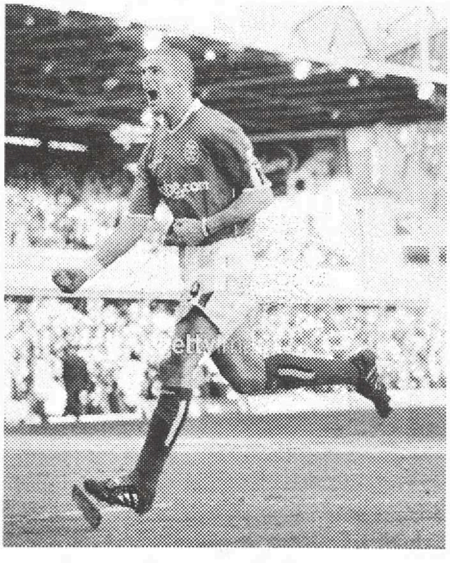
Blues v the Arse

It's probably my imagination but it always seems to be sunny on the first day and last day of the season. Ok they are both in the summer (ish) but this England and summer doesn't necessarily mean sunny. Not that I'm complaining! It's nice not having to wear a woolly hat, gloves, thick coat, emergency foil blanket and fisherman's woolly socks. It makes a change to be able to a walk to the ground with the sun beating down on your face instead of hail driving deep into your eye sockets. Oh yes and the girls wear short skirts and tiny tops! I'm glad I don't have a daughter cos I certainly wouldn't want her coming down the Blues to ogled by a bunch of dirty of lechers!

Anyway, to the game. When I saw the fixture list last June, I saw Arse was our last match and said that's not a bad time to be playing them, as by then they will probably have won or lost the title already. So it was an added bonus not only for that to have happened but also for them to be in the cup final the next week as well. Not that you would have thought so when they fielded an almost full strength team, as it turned out the only player they rested before starting in the cup final was Reyes.

We had a couple of changes with DJ suspended and Stan injured, and this gave chances to Carter and Clemence. There was little in the way of tough tackling in the first ten minutes but it was good to see Blues match arse passing the ball around, keeping it on the floor and not wasting possession. Not something I could have even imagined we could do three years ago.

We were first to create anything like a chance as Pennant weaved his magic on the right but Pandiani couldn't make anything from his cross and the arse defence closed him down. Next it was Walter's turn to be provider but Clemence drove his shot well over the bar. Although possession was fairly even it was only Blues that seemed to make any half chances as on 25 minutes the next also fell to Walter, but this time his header flew wide of the



post. This was followed by chances for Carter, Upson and Heskey but each failed to connect under pressure. It was only with the half time whistle looming that Taylor had his first save to make, but the long drive from Van Persie was comfortably taken. 0-0

The beginning of the second half looked like we might end up paying the price for not scoring in the first 45. First a Van Persie free kick whizzed over the bar and then the best chance of the game came as Blues went to sleep at the back and Berkamp ended up one on one with Taylor. Fortunately his lob drifted away and past the post. Blues tried to pick up the pace and Nafti created space for a shot but it was easily saved. Back at our end Taylor was the busier saving from Berkamp and Alidiere.

With Clinton coming on for the injured Carter, Blues became much more attacking, almost 4-3-3 and chances started to come again. First Clinton broke clear but his first touch let him down and the keeper smothered at his feet. Then Heskey blazed over after Clinton pulled back for him. It wasn't one way this time as Arse matched our chances at the other end in what was becoming a very entertaining game.

On 80 minutes it became more than entertaining as Blues won a corner; it was only partly cleared and bobbling around the box when Walter got back up off the floor to lash the ball into the net. I think it's fair to say Walter was happy as he waved his shirt around although the ref was less so and booked him for it. Blues fans took it as a cue for EASY, EASY, EASY!

Unfortunately there is no such word in Blues vocabulary and with two minutes left once again we gave space out on the left and the ball sailed across to an unmarked Dutchman. To be fair he was probably unmarked because he was offside but there you go, the linesman didn't think so and the ball was clipped into the net for the equaliser. 1-1

I suppose we all settled for a draw and the fact that at least we had taken a point off arse to go with those we took off chelski and manure but Emile had other thoughts. Chasing a lost ball he bundled Campbell and Senderos out of the way and blasted the ball into the far corner; a fantastic finish to Emiles' season and one he fully deserved after putting a lot of critics to shame with his performances week in and week out. Final whistle 2-1.

What a great way to finish the season, beating last seasons' champions (and future cup winners as it turned out) with a late goal from a player who is ridiculed by every other clubs' supporters and who simply brushed England's centre half aside before planting in a sublime finish. Well-done Emile. I think it's fair to say that you have convinced every single Blues fan that had reservations about your signing last year. (That's aimed at my son!)

It was also good to finish on a high note seeing as the season on the whole had been a bit of a disappointment with a lot of us having hopes of us at least pushing for Europe, even if we didn't get there. As it turned out some of our new signings didn't quite deliver and although we probably haven't had the number of injuries we have had in the past we did lose possibly our three most influential players in Dunn, Izzet and of course, Forssell. When you think about it, we did well not to struggle against relegation.

So it's off for a few weeks of watching cricket and doing those DIY jobs that have to wait during the season and we'll all be back in August to start all over again!

K.R.O.

Tony

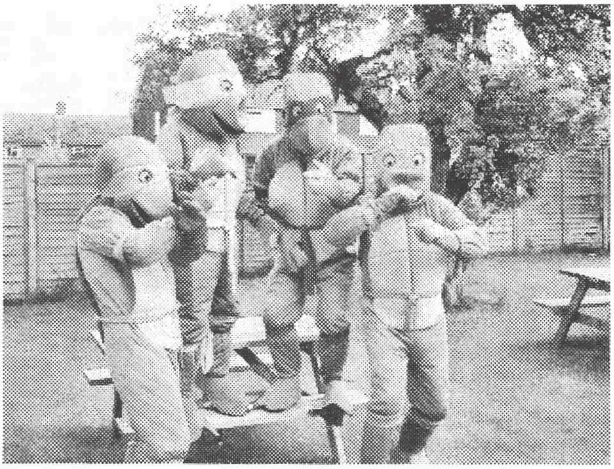
NOTICE ANYTHING DIFFERENT IN THE RAILWAY END WHEN ARSENAL CAME TO TOWN?

A clown, Batman, Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles, or maybe a Roman Centurion?

It has become a custom of Arsenal fans group REDaction to go to the last away game of each season in fancy dress. Last season, it happened to be a visit to St Andrews.

We managed to commission a double decker coach to get us there, with the help of the Arsenal travel club. The day started early, as we left Highbury at 9:30. On a 30 degree day, this was not the day for the air conditioning to break down! By noon however, we were sat out in a beer garden, owned by a friend of REDaction, chilling out and having a few laughs. After an hour stoppage, many photos, a small game of football and a lot to drink we headed back on board, and with tongues loosened the songs soon came one after the other.

We got, as you may imagine, a few strange looks as the coach entered Birmingham city centre. This was matched all the way through, and even by our own fans, some of which clearly didn't have a clue that this was planned! The bemusement on the stewards faces when we approached the turnstiles was something to behold!



A quick word on your security. My god is it tight! Most of those in fancy dress went through no fewer than 4 security checks – which were very thorough! I'm sure they thought we were with "Fathers For Justice" and that we were going to try and scale the stadium in protest.

So, into our seats. Must say well played to the Police on the day, and the Birmingham fans who were sat on the other side of the partition. The Police for being understanding and not forcing us to sit down all the time, and the fans for the banter that went back and forth.

From our point of view the game was a big nothing, a poor display by our standards, and you fully deserved the win.

The mutual applause that echoed around St Andrews after the game was quite touching, and a good way for the fans to see off the 2004/2005 league campaign.

The journey home took a fair while, with a crash on the motorway holding us all up, but overall, a good day was had by all us in fancy dress, and so our thanks to Birmingham City FC and their fans for contributing to the day.

Mike Bohndiek

REDaction

BLUE AWAY DAYS

Another "last away" trip of another Premier league season, boy they sure come round quick. It didn't seem like months' that we were in the sweltering heat of Portsmouth's away end back in August 04. It didn't turn out like we all thought it would last season, though there were still plenty of good times. We didn't make Europe, not this time, though if nothing else, we all learnt a big lesson, and that's, no team is guaranteed success but try telling that to some Bluenoses though. By that, I mean the ones that boo.

Norwich was a weekend job, a weekend of booze and football; it's what life is all about. Carling (driver) with B5B already sitting comfortably picked Blue-J and I up at around 3ish on Friday afternoon for the long haul down to deepest Canary land. The journey didn't seem to take that long, though that might have something to do with the fact I slept most of the way.

Booked in, un-packed, it was time to go on the piss in Norwich. Met up with Dave & Paula. A great evening was had by all of us Bluenoses on the streets of Norwich; one strange thing though was all the Bluenoses we kept bumping into. There were loads around town. Strange really, there were loads of Blues and not a Norwich supporter in sight, all night.

When Clives' lot turned up on Saturday morning, we marched down the road en-mass, to find a nice Norwich boozer. We had to walk past Carrow Road and I must say, it's a great little ground. All four sides look like new stands. Very impressive. We bumped into Murph who had driven from Brum. We were being guided by Carling, who'd been shown the way to the pub by the hotel odd job man. What he forgot to tell everyone was that he'd found the only hill in all of Norfolk on the

CARROW ROAD
Out on the lash on Friday in Norwich

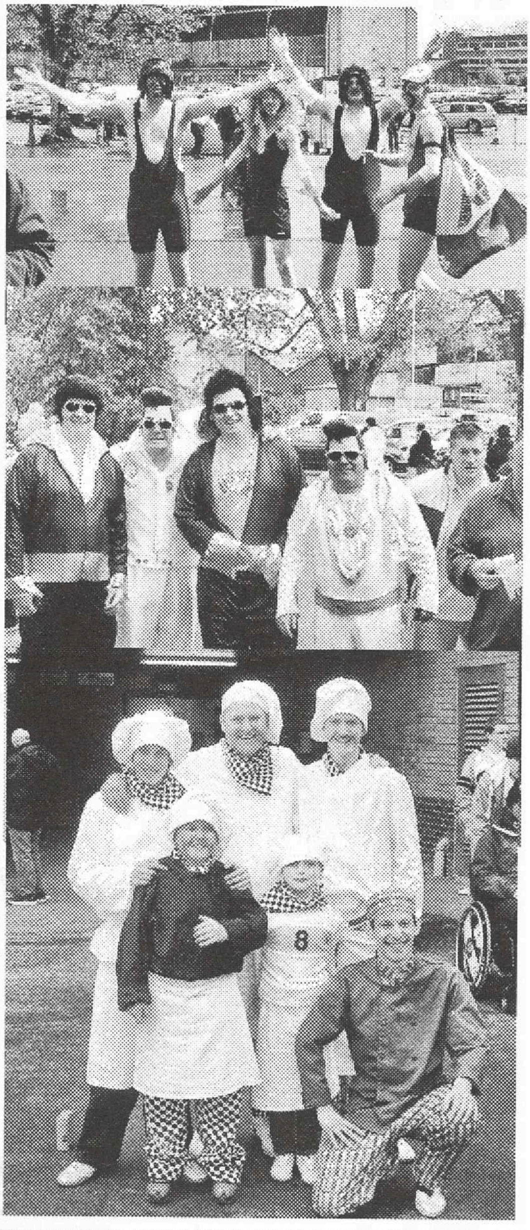
CANARY CAPERS IT'S NARWICH AWAY

way to the pub. By the time we'd got to the top, we were knackered. Though it was worth it, just to get the beers in.

I must say, these Norfolk people are a civilised lot, so they weren't really prepared when a small group of "Zulu's" came in, one of which I'm afraid was looking for trouble. All he got for his troubles though, was no beer.

Only had time for a couple of beers, as I was selling, yeah I know "WHY" Well, I hadn't sold at an away ground all season, and I'd promised to myself I'd do at least one every season in the Premier, it's a lucky charm thing. You Noses out there, who like to wear your lucky pants or have a certain breakfast on match days, will know what I mean.

Being as though KB had only decided to take up the minimum allocation, you'd have thought any Nose hanging about outside would struggle to get tickets? You thought wrong. Two lads we'd seen the night before on the booze in Norwich city centre, hung around outside trying to pick up tickets. To my surprise



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they got the tickets. Loads of Noses had come in fancy dress, which was great. The main theme being Chefs, in honour of Norwich's finest "Let's be havin' you"? So, with Blue-J doing loads of badges and your truly shifting plenty of MIB's time soon flew to kick-off. As always, it's good to see all the usual faces, wishing them all a happy summer and a swift one too.

THE GAME.

It was one of those, where at the end, you thought "how the hell didn't we win it" the reason being, we didn't have the luck in front of goal, and (ref moaning mode) the man in black was a complete arsehole. Norwich, in their wisdom, decided to try and rough us up. DJ of course, fell right into the trap, by giving a Canary, a nice left jab. Even though, only minutes earlier he'd been fouled, three times in quick succession. Sorry, let me rephrase that, he'd been "Mugged" three times. We all know, that if you raise your fists, more than likely, you'll walk. Even with one less player than relegation threatened Norwich, we still out played them.

Just before half-time, again the ref decided to be a "Homer" with Kenny shadowing Huckerby into the area. I'd say, he got the ball, before Hucks fell, but the man in charge decided it was a penalty.

Second half was all Blues. We pressed down the right with Supa Mario and Pennant marauding through the Norwich defence. Twice Morrison hit the woodwork. It was disappointing to go down 1-0 to yet another doomed club, and that's one thing we've got to sort out next season. Also, losing this game ended our hopes of over taking the Vile, which was a shame.

Another season, of away days over. It flew, again. I suppose this coming season will fly by too. But, we'll all be there again, supporting the team we love, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Keep Right On, because this season's going to be better, much, much better.

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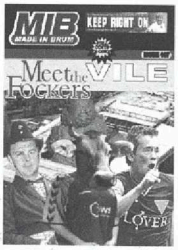
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